



RICHARD MONTGOMERY HIGH SCHOOL

250 Richard Montgomery Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20852 (301) 610-8000

RMS English 9 Summer Reading, 2018-2019

About the Course

We will examine the broad range of human experience through the study of varied literary works. While we learn about the writer's craft, we will gain insights into how writers create worlds for their intended and unintended audiences and shape meaning through their purposeful use of language. What is the writer revealing to us about ourselves and the world we live in? How does perspective determine and fashion the story that is told? How are we transformed by our experiences with literary works? These questions will guide much of our inquiry throughout the school year.

Required Summer Reading Texts: *The Odyssey* by Homer (Robert Fitzgerald translation only). Read the entire epic prior to the first day of school, completing the notes assignment below as you read. **Bring your notes to class on the first day of school.**

Summer Reading Notes Assignment for *The Odyssey*

As you read *The Odyssey*, take notes on each section:

- Books 1-4 The Telemachy
- Books 5-8 Odysseus' journey from Ogygia to Phaiakia
- Books 9-12 Odysseus' adventures following the Trojan War
- Books 13-24 Odysseus' return

These notes must be typed in Times New Roman or Garamond 12-point font, and **should not exceed one page per section** (you may use two pages for the last section, however, which is very long).

Please use the following subheadings to organize your notes.

- *Arête*: A difficult Greek concept that cannot be translated to a direct one-to-one equivalent in modern English, the word *arête* has many meanings. Dr. Stephen G. Miller states that Greeks who demonstrate *arête* show "ephemeral excellence" and "transient triumph." Such *arête* could be shown at home, during athletic competitions, in battle, or any other aspect of Greek life. Do NOT confuse this term with the character named Arete, the Queen of Phaiakia.
- Characters (focus on those who act in each section); include descriptors/traits of each
- Aspects of Greek culture, including...
 - Ways of governing
 - Family dynamics (both mortals and gods: husbands and wives, fathers and sons, sons and mothers)
 - Role of the gods/human relationships with the gods
 - Social structure (i.e. servants and masters, status of warriors/heroes, roles of men and women)

See a sample of notes for the first four books of *The Odyssey* on the next page. Notice the use of several cited quotes from the text.

If you have any questions about the summer reading, please contact Laurie Brown (Laurie.J.Brown@mcpsmd.net)
or Leah Wilson (Leah_B_Wilson@mcpsmd.org).

The Odyssey by Homer

Notes: Books 1-4

Arête

o Book 1

Aigisthos' lack of *arête* (stealing a man's wife—even though warned by Hermes not to) contrasts with Orestes' *arête*, who exacts justice on his father's murderer: "Have you heard / what glory young Orestes won / when he cut down that two-faced man, Aigisthos" (1.344-46)

o Book 2

Telemakhos shows *arête* by demonstrating *xenia* (hospitality): "Straight to the door he came, irked with himself to think a visitor had been kept there waiting" (1.150-151); he greets a stranger, welcomes him into his house, and offers food, drink, a bath, and a gift

o Book 3



Penelope portrays *arête* with her cunning ruse to keep the suitors at bay for three years: "So every day she wove on the great loom— / but every night by torchlight she unwove it" (2.112-13)

o Book 4

The town of Pylos shows *arête* by sacrificing 81 bulls to the gods

Nestor lauds Odysseus for his *arête* in military strategy, claiming "He had no rivals, / your father, at the tricks of war" (3.130-131)

Menelaos recounts the *arête* demonstrated during the Trojan War by Odysseus, whose Trojan Horse foiled the enemy and sealed victory for the Akhians

Characters

o Gods: Zeus (father of the gods; "summoner of cloud"), Athena (goddess of wisdom; supports Odysseus' return)

o Mortals: Telemakhos, Antinoos, Eurymakhos and other suitors, Penelope, Phemios (the bard), Eurykleia (devoted nurse), Mentos (really Athena in disguise), Nestor,

Menelaos, Helen

Aspects of Greek culture

o Role of women

Telemakhos rebukes Penelope for weeping and tells her, “Odysseus was not the only one at Troy / never to know the day of his homecoming” (1.405-06)

o Family dynamics (i.e. husbands and wives, fathers and their children, mothers and sons)

Telemakhos tells Eurykleia: “you must swear to keep it from my mother, until the eleventh day, or twelfth, or till she misses me, or hears that I am gone” (2.396-398)

o Role of the gods in the lives of mortals

Telemakhos says “the gods have laid such other burdens on me” (1.289)

Athena appears as Penelope’s sister Iphthime: “The goddess sent this dream to Odysseus’ house / to quiet Penelope and end her grieving” (4.852-53)

o Social structure (i.e. servants and masters, status of warriors/heroes)

Mentor is left in charge of Odysseus’ home during his absence